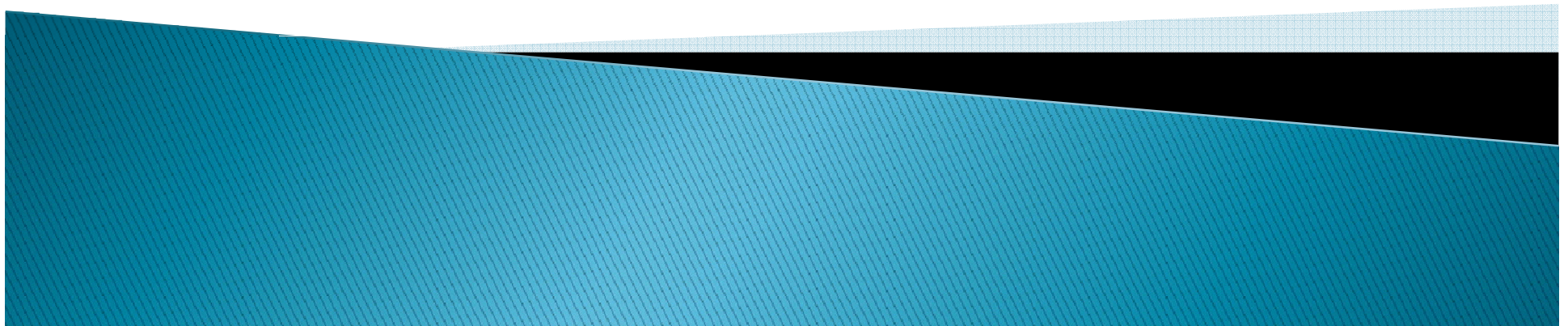# Integrating action learning into the work-based learning curriculum
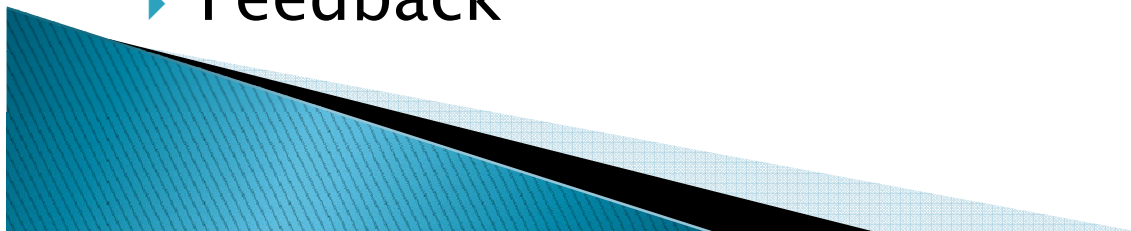
Nicky Drucquer (Directorate Of Corporate Development)

James Dooher (School of Nursing & Midwifery)

Overview of workshop

▸ Introductions

▸ Brief review of AL methodology

▸ Issues raised by the use of AL on the *Learning and Improving in Partnership* course
  ◦ The set facilitator's perspective
  ◦ The independent evaluator's perspective

▸ Group work

▸ Feedback

Definition

▸ 'Action Learning is based on the relationship between reflection and action … where the focus is on the issues and problems that individuals bring and planning future action with the structured attention and support of the group. Put simply, it is about solving problems and getting things done'

▸ Ref: Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall. A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2000). Kogan Page
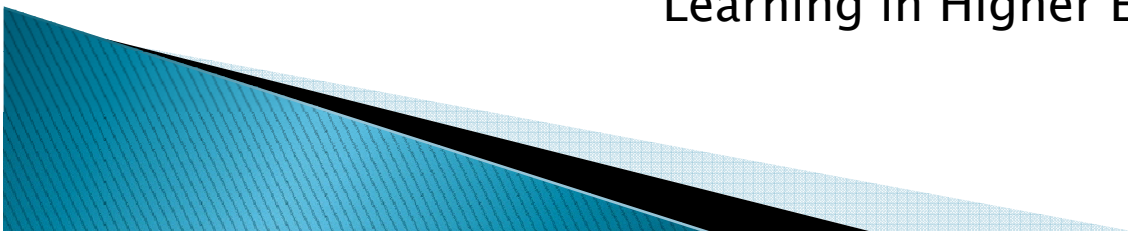
What is an Action Learning Set?

- A group of 4 - 7 people who get together to discuss issues of personal or mutual importance.

- Deal with the specific needs of the set members and require agreed action by the end of each meeting

- May, or may not, be facilitated, or may start with a facilitator and later become self-facilitating
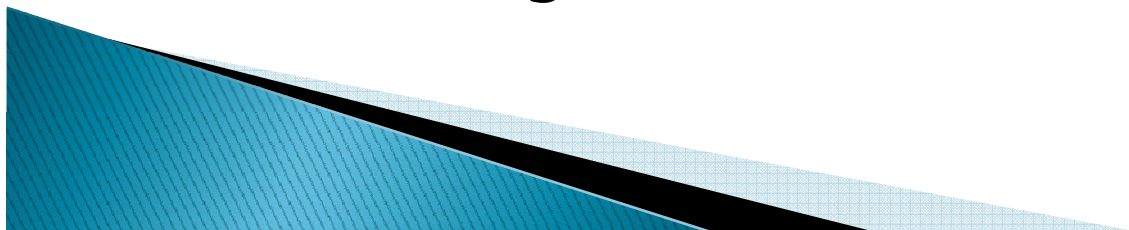
The Role of Participant

▸ Work together on their chosen topics, listening and supporting their colleagues, and helping them to decide on courses of action

▸ Help individuals to understand the problem better and to challenge their underlying assumptions, rather than to offer advice
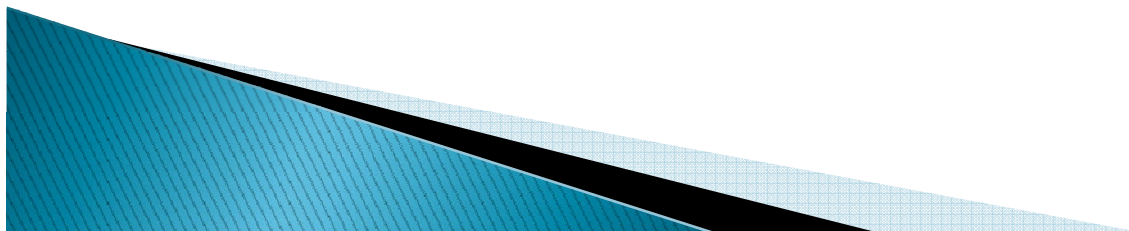
The Role of Facilitator

▸ The facilitator will help to develop the ground rules for the operation of the set

▸ This will include allocation of time, confidentiality, attendance etc
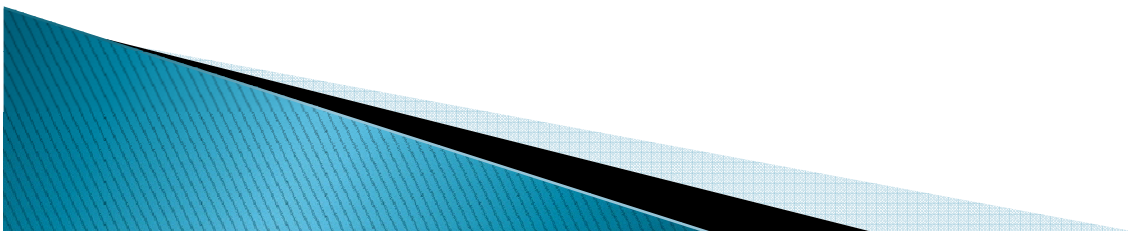
Why Use Action Learning on the LIIP programme?

Action learning matches the philosophy of this project, thus to:

▸ Give participants the opportunity to learn from each other and engage in shared learning

▸ Enhance the opportunities given to learn more about service improvement initiatives

▸ Support innovation

▸ Allow time for reflection on current practice – but encourage action

Why Use Action Learning on the LIIP programme?

▸ Allow participants to highlight problems/ areas where they have special interest, strength or weakness

▸ Enable participants to deal with the kind of management problems which cannot easily resolved through lectures / seminars

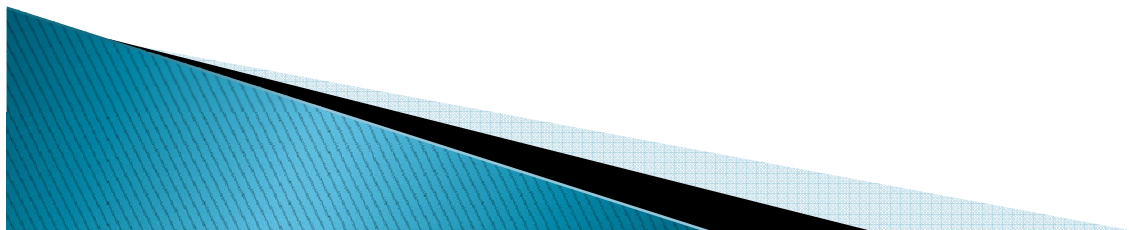▸ Give enough time to build up strong relationships and networks outside seminar or lecture based sessions
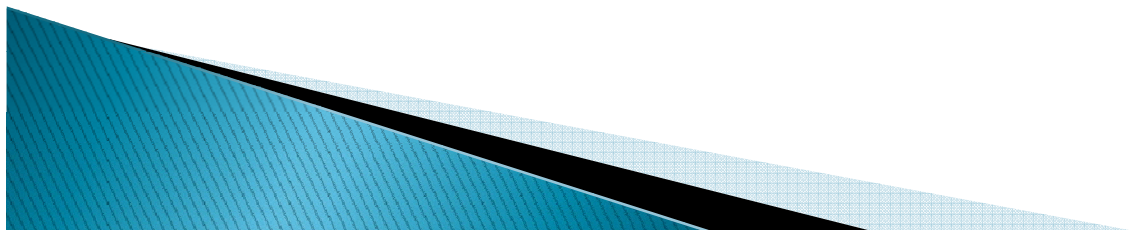
Issues: the facilitator's perspective

▸ Needed to change my style of interaction

▸ Employ skills to ensure a productive group process

    Leadership
            Focus
            Stimulate
            Support
            Participate
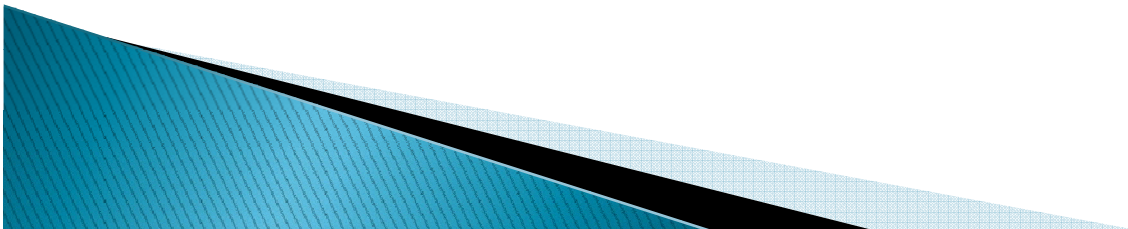   Team Building

Issues: the facilitator's perspective

Referee
- Regulation
- Protect members
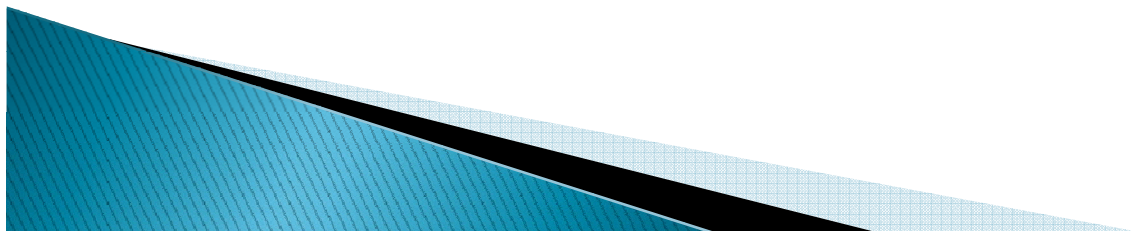- Deal with problems
- Timekeeper

Neutral
- Pragmatic
- Encourage feedback

Specific Difficulties

- One group member who consistently avoided producing work and "ad libbed" the development of his project at every AL set

- One group member who demonstrated sexism and other mildly inappropriate comments

Issues: the evaluator's perspective

AL as a bridge between practice and theory

▸ *John: It was probably the most important part in putting things in place in my mind. Lectures and presentations don't always enable you to apply things to your own project whereas AL sets help you to link theories and case studies to what you are actually doing through talking to other people and having them inputting directly*
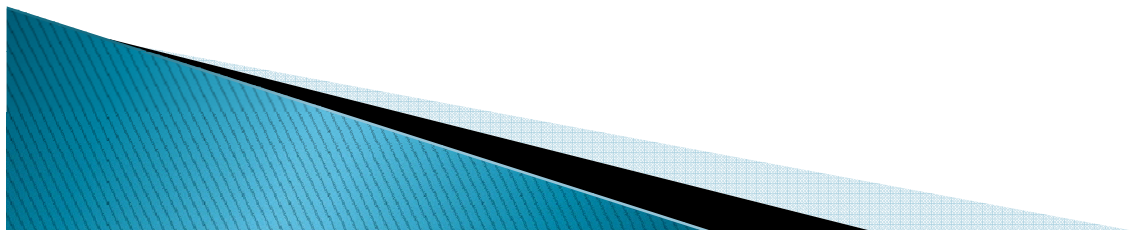
# Sets as a forum for coaching to achieve project-related goals

- *Kerry: When you are running the project it is difficult to step out of it. The other members of the set did that for me. They would say 'have you thought of this?' and I hadn't. I was too wrapped up in it. I didn't have the headspace'*
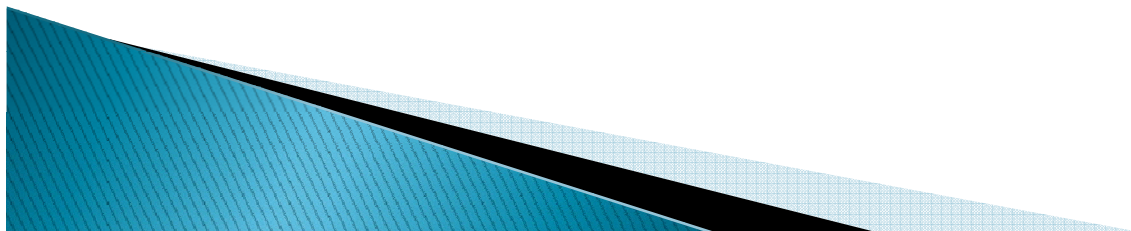
Recruitment of people with relevant roles and high levels of self motivation

-

  - *Kate: One the one hand I had a lot on my plate being new to the role and I knew it would be hard to fit in study and days at college on a four day week. On the other hand I thought it would be really good to be able to consolidate what I am doing with some theory*
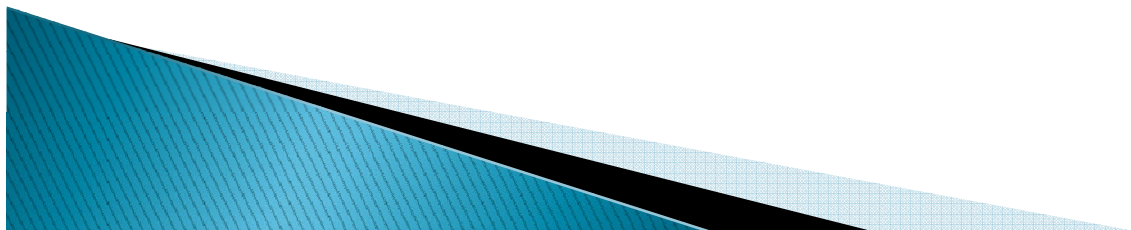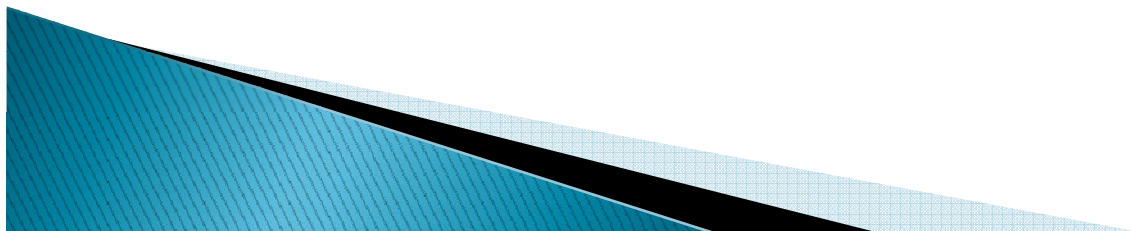
A mentoring gap

Experiences ranged from 'good' to downright 'disappointing'

Two course members deterred/ prevented from attending the course by their line manager on the grounds that

Vishal 'I should put service commitment before study'

Group work: consideration of a possible application of AL methodology

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats